

Census and Economic Information Center

Release Highlights

Montana Department of Commerce



Andrew Geiger
Research Analyst

Census and
Economic
Information Center
301 S. Park Avenue
P.O. Box 200505
Helena, MT 59620
406.841.2740 Office
406.841.2702 TDD
<http://ceic.mt.gov>
E-Mail: ceic@mt.gov

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The U.S. Census Bureau has just released population estimates by age groups, and the numbers show some interesting trends for Montana:

School-Age Children

There are fewer elementary age children in Montana than the previous estimate year, with children ages 5 to 13 at 101,627 in 2004 as opposed to 105,608 for 2003, for a reduction of 3.8%. High School age children saw a similar trend, although not as drastic, with the 2004 estimates for ages 14 to 17 at 53,956 for 2004 and 54,724 for 2003, or a reduction of 1.4%. This trend may be softening, because although children under age 5 also saw a slight reduction for 2004, it is less than 1% from the 2003 estimates.

Working Age Population

It is Montana's working age adult population that saw the most dramatic growth from the 2003 to 2004 estimates. The 2004 number for persons age 18 to 64 stands at 592,223, a 2.1% up tick from the 2003 estimate of 579,870. While we are seeing some growth of younger adults in Montana, the largest population increase continues to be persons ages 45 to 64. This group grew 4.1% in 2004, in contrast to a 2.5 increase for those ages 18 to 24, and a slight reduction (.10%) for those ages 25 to 44.

Older Population

Persons 65 years of age and older also increased as a population group. The total number rose from 125,092 in 2003 to 126,549 in 2004, for a percentage increase of 1.2%. While it is difficult to see trends within smaller age brackets within this group, Montana is following the nationwide trend of persons living longer, with a 3.6% increase in persons 85 years and older from 2003.

What's Coming Next

Given that there are fewer school age children in Montana, the fastest growth showing up in the top half of the working age population, and elderly Montanans living longer, it is not surprising that Montana's median age crept upward in 2004 to 39.5, (up from 39.1 in 2003). Once again, Montana seems to be following this national trend of aging and the pending retirement of the Baby Boomers. Montana is 6th in the country for growth in the population 18 years and older, and 10th for 65 years of age and older. This Spring/Summer, the Census Bureau will release data at the county level, allowing us to take a much closer look at what these trends will mean for schools, workforce development and elder care.